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FROM WHITE HOUSE

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Compiled by
LOUIS A. WARREN

ROOSEVELT, TAFT AND WILSON,

At The Birth Place of

ABRAHAM LINCOLN



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SEP 12 1921

no. 1

PREFACE.

The Lincoln Farm Association which was responsible for the development of the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln at Hodgenville, Kentucky, brought to the historic spot during the period it managed and carried to completion the project, three president of the United States.

The purpose of this publication is to present under one cover the addresses delivered by these three visiting presidents; Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson. The occasions, so much alike in purpose, although occurring at periods in three administrations, called from the speakers remarks of much the same character; which fact will allow the reader to judge in what esteem the Emancipator was held by the Progressive, the Republican and the Democratic leader mentioned above.

Those interested in the literary ability of these men of letters will find in these three orations of about the same length, an opportunity to compare addresses delivered in the same environment and resulting from a common source of inspiration.

No attempt is made by the author in the introductory remarks preceding each article, to give other than the immediate data necessary to acquaint the reader with the program of the occasion under which the address was delivered. For illustrated description of the Lincoln National Park, see book under aforesaid caption by the same author, and printed by the same publisher as the volume in hand.

Hodgenville, Ky.

LOUIS A. WARREN.

CORNER STONE CEREMONIES

With Address by
Theodore Roosevelt.

The corner stone of the Memorial Building erected at the birth-place of Abraham Lincoln was laid at a celebration on February 12, 1909, in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of Lincoln's birth. The program of the occasion was as follows:

Invocation—E. L. Powell, Minister First Christian Church,
Louisville, Ky.

Address on behalf of the United States of America—
President Theodore Roosevelt.

Address on behalf of the State of Kentucky—Governor
Augustus Wilson.

Address on behalf of Lincoln Farm Association—Governor
Joseph Folk, President of Association.

Address on behalf of Federal Army—General James
Grant Wilson.

Address on behalf of Confederate Army—General Luke
E. Wright.

Documents deposited in Corner Stone—Copy of Emancipation Proclamation, I. T. Mcntgomery, ex-slave; Coins of the day, Clarence H. Mackay, Treas. of Lincoln Farm Association; History of Lincoln Farm Association, Richard Lloyd Jones, Secretary of Association; Copy of LaRue County Herald Feb. 11, 1909, Robert J. Collier, V-President of Association; Silk American Flag, President Theodore Roosevelt.

THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH.

We have met here to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of one of the two great Americans; of one of the two or three greatest men of the Nineteenth century; of one of the greatest men in the world's history. This rail splitter, this boy who passed his ungainly youth in the dire poverty of the

poorest of the frontier folk, whose rise was by weary and painful labor, lived to lead his people through the burning flames of a struggle from which the nation emerged purified as by fire, born anew to a loftier life. After long years of iron effort and of failure that came more often than victory, he at last rose to the leadership of the republic, at the moment when that leadership had become the stupendous world-task of the time. He grew to know greatness, but never happiness, save that which springs from doing well a painful and a vital task. Power was his, but not pleasure. The furrows deepened on his brow, but his eyes were undimmed by either hate or fear. His gaunt shoulders were bowed, but his steel sinews never faltered as he bore for a burden the destinies of his people. His great and tender heart shrank from giving pain; and the task allotted him was to pour out like water the life blood of the young men, and to feel in his every fiber the sorrow of the women. Disaster saddened but never dismayed him. As the red years went by they found him ever doing his duty in the present, ever facing the future with fearless front, high of heart and dauntless of soul. Unbroken by hatred, unshaken by scorn, he worked and suffered for the people. Triumph was his at the last, and barely had he tasted it before murder found him, and the kindly patient, fearless eyes were closed forever.

As a people we are indeed beyond measure fortunate in the characters of the two greatest of our public men, Washington and Lincoln. Widely tho they differed in externals, the Virginia landed gentleman and the Kentucky backwoodsman, they were alike in essentials, they were alike in the great qualities which rendered each able to render service to

his nation and to all mankind such as no other man of his generation could or did render. Each had lofty ideals, but each in striving to attain these lofty ideals was guided by the soundest common sense. Each possessed inflexible courage in adversity, and a soul wholly unspoiled by prosperity. Each possessed all the gentle virtues commonly exhibited by good men who lack rugged strength of character. Each possessed also all the strong qualities commonly exhibited by those towering masters of mankind who have too often shown themselves devoid of so much as the understanding of the words by which we signify the qualities of duty, of mercy, of devotion to the right, of lofty disinterestedness in battling for the good of others. There have been other men as great and other men as good; but in all the history of mankind there are no other two good men as great. Widely though the problems of today differ from the problems set for solution to Washington when he founded this nation, to Lincoln when he saved it and freed the slave, yet the qualities they showed in meeting these problems are exactly the same as those we should show in doing our work to-day.

Lincoln saw into the future with the prophetic imagination usually vouchsafed only to the poet and the seer. He had in him all the lift toward greatness of the visionary, without any of the visionary's fanaticism or egotism, without any of the visionary's narrow jealousy of the practical man and inability to strive in practical fashion for the realization of an ideal. He had the practical man's hard common sense and willingness to adapt means to ends; but there was in him none of that morbid growth of mind and soul which binds so many practical men to the

higher things of life. No more practical man ever lived than this homely backwoods idealist; but he had nothing in common with those practical men whose consciences are warped until they fail to distinguish between good and evil, fail to understand that strength, ability, shrewdness, whether in the world of business or of polities, only serve to make their possessor a more noxious, a more evil member of the community, if they are not guided and controlled by a fine and high moral sense.

We of this day must try to solve many social and industrial problems, requiring to an especial degree the combination of indomitable resolution with cool-headed sanity. We can profit by the way in which Lincoln used both these traits as he strove for reform. We can learn much of value from the very attacks which following that course brought upon his head attacks alike by the extremists of reaction. He never wavered in devotion to his principles, in his love for the Union, and in his abhorrence of slavery. Timid and lukewarm people were always denouncing him because he was too extreme; but, as a matter of fact, he never went to extremes, he worked step by step; and because of this the extremists hated and denounced him with a fervor which now seems to us fantastic in its deification of the unreal and the impossible. At the very time when one side was holding him up as the apostle of social revolution because he was against slavery, the leading abolitionist denounced him as the "slave hound of Illinois." When he was the second time candidate for President the majority of his opponents attacked him because of what they termed his extreme radicalism, while a minority threatened to bolt his nomination because he was not radical enough. He had con-

tinually to check those who wished to go forward too fast, at the very time that he overrode the opposition of those who wished not to go forward at all. The goal was never dim before his vision; but he picked his way cautiously, without either halt or hurry, as he strode toward it, through such a morass of difficulty that no man of less courage would have attempted it, while it would surely have overwhelmed any man of judgment less serene.

Yet perhaps the most vitally important was the extraordinary way in which Lincoln could fight valiantly against what he deemed wrong and yet preserve undiminished his love and respect for the brother with whom he differed. In the hour of a triumph that would have turned any weaker man's head, in the heat of a struggle which spurred many a good man to dreadful vindictiveness, he said truthfully that so long as he had been in his office he had never willingly planted a thorn in any man's bosom, and besought his supporters to study the incidents of the trial through which they were passing as philosophy from which to learn wisdom and not as wrongs to be avenged; ending with the solemn exhortation that, as the strife was over, all should reunite in a common effort to save their common country.

He lived in days that were great and terrible, when brother fought against brother for what each sincerely deemed to be the right. In a contest so grim the strong men who alone can carry it through are rarely able to do justice to the deep convictions of those with whom they grapple in mortal strife. At such time men see through a glass darkly; to only the rarest and loftiest spirits is vouchsafed that clear vision which gradually comes to all, even to the lesser, as the struggle fades into distance, and wounds

are forgotten and peace creeps back to the hearts that were hurt. But to Lincoln was given this supreme vision. He did not hate the man from whom he differed. Weakness was as foreign as wickedness to his strong, gentle nature; but his courage was of a quality so high that it needed no boistering of dark passion. He saw clearly that the same high qualities, the same courage and willingness for self-sacrifice, and devotion to the right as it was given them to see the right, belonged both to the men of the North and to the men of the South.

The years roll by and as all of us wherever we dwell, grow to feel an equal pride in the valor and self-devotion alike of the men who wore the blue and the men who wore the gray, so this whole nation will grow to feel a peculiar sense of pride in the man whose blood was shed for the union of his people and for the freedom of a race; the lover of his country and of all mankind; the mightiest of the mighty men who mastered the mighty day, Abraham Lincoln.

DEDICATORY SERVICES

With Address by

William Howard Taft

Upon the completion of the building erected for the purpose of housing the cabin in which Lincoln was born, dedicatory services were arranged by the Lincoln Farm Association for November 9th, 1911. The principle speakers for the occasion were:

William Howard Taft—President of the United States.

Joseph W. Folk—Ex-Governor of Missouri.

Augustus E. Wilson—Governor of Kentucky.

William A. Borah—Senator from Idaho.

Gen. John C. Black—Washington, D. C.

Henry Watterson—Louisville, Ky.

The invocation was offered by Rabbi Enlow and the Benediction by Bishop Byrne.

THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH.

There is nothing so fascinating on the one hand and nothing so difficult on the other as tracing by heredity the developments of genius and real greatness. Perhaps this is because there are so few instances in history that prompt the search. The explanation of Lincoln and his wonderful character from his origin and environment is almost as difficult as the explanation of Shakespeare; but the passion of the world grows for more intimate knowledge of his personality and a deeper inquiry into the circumstances of his wonderful life.

“No year passes that something more is not written of him, and testimonials in loving mercy and interest increase. The nation itself, has yet to embody in marble or bronze its widened appreciation of

him as its savior. Nothing of his characteristics is too incidental for those who study over again his great speeches and messages and trace again the amazing story from the lowly home in Kentucky whence he sprang to the height of his glory in his martyrdom.

“It is eminently appropriate that the farm where Lincoln was born should come into public possession and should have erected on it a suitable memorial in which to preserve mementoes of his personality and biographies of his life. ,

“Few men have come into public prominence who came absolutely from the soil, as did Abraham Lincoln. It is difficult to imagine the lack of comfort, accomodations, and the necessities of life that were in the cabin in which he was born. With an illiterate and shiftless father, and a mother, who, though of education and force, died before he reached youth, his future was dark indeed. In the stepmother that his father formed for him, however, he had a woman with strength of character and education enough to assist him. He says he never received any education except reading and writing and arithmetic to the rule of three; but he had access to books, and, whether he kept a store or acted as a flatboatman on the Mississippi or finally came to study law, he read the books he had thoroughly and they included the Bible and Shakespeare.

“One of his biographers who knew him well, says that after he had finished this small library, he read some but he thought much more. He thought of what he read, and he exercised his intellect by constant practice till he made his logical processes an instrument to search truth and analyze facts that

has rarely been equaled in anyone. The almost squalor in which he passed his early life, made him familiar with the sufferings, thoughts and sympathies of the plain people; and when he came to great power, his understanding of their reasoning and of their views gave him an advantage in interpreting their attitude which cannot be overstated. He followed closely the popular judgment, but he did not yield to it, save when his reasoning faculties established its correctness.

“His evident sympathy for the colored race, his roused sense of justice in their behalf, his earnest passions to secure them freedom and equality of opportunity, had their inspiration in the sufferings and limitations of his own early life.

“He was not slow, but he was cautious, deliberate, attentive, as befitted one who insisted on establishing every proposition that he adhered to by original reasoning from fundamental postulates. The lucidity and clearness of his thought manifested itself in the simplicity, directness and clearness of his style. He had imagination and he loved poetry. He had the rythm of languages, and though purely self-educated, these circumstances developed a power of literary expression that the world and especially the literary world has come fully to recognize and enjoy.

“Humor he used in his conversation, stories of humor he told, as he said once, to enable him to deny requests or to express difference of opinion without abruptness and without hurting the feelings of his petitioner. But humor he rarely introduced into his carefully prepared speeches or his messages. A serious aspect on the subject he was discussing and his intense earnestness in framing the reasons

for his conclusions so as to impress its justice on the reader or the listener, prevented him from the use of wit or humor, though it was always at his command.

“He was a lawyer, and a good one. He studied his cases hard, and he prepared his arguments with the force and cleverness that might have been expected from one of his mental makeup. His mind was luminous with truth. His conscience was governed by devotion to right, and the tenderness of his heart was only restrained by his intellect and his conscience. His determination to see both sides and reason out conflicting arguments to a satisfactory conclusion, made him tolerant and patient beyond conception.

“The story of his dealings with McClellan, with the members of his Cabinet, and with others unconscious of the great genius and heart with whom they were in personal touch, exasperates the sympathetic reader and arouse a protest that vents itself in contempt toward many of those who surrounded him and yet did not measure the great nature they were privileged to know. The diary of his Cabinet officers show how under his very nose and generally with his clear conception of it, political combinations were formed, only to be dissolved and fall harmless through the patient tact of this master of men, this greatest of diplomatists.

“When he came to the Presidency he had only experience of two terms in the Legislature, of one term in Congress, of the political discussions and debates in the interior districts, and of the great debate with Douglas. He had no training at all in administrative matters, and when they were presented to him the awful task which the threatened secession

of the Southern States presented he had to feel his way.

“Seward, having been beaten by Lincoln by accident as he conceived, and feeling himself much better qualified for the Presideney, did not hesitate to attempt to usurp Lincoln’s function as President, by distributing patronage in various departments until that quiet, masterly but humorous way, Lincoln took the reins and held them to the end. With Seward, with Stanton, with Chase, he had his trials. Chase was a great lawyer, a sincere, courageous and consistent abolitionist, an astute politician with the highest ambition and with no delicacy or embarrassing sense of loyalty that would prevent him from organizing a combination to defeat Mr. Lincoln’s political purposes and to elect Mr. Chase. Stanton was a great, rough, able, administrator, but he was rugged and honest and effective, and Lincoln crossed him only when he had to and treated his excesses of impatience with that humorous tolerance that shows itself in so many stories of encounters between them. With no knowledge of military strategy, he developed out of his own study a clearness of perception and a common sense view of the needs of the army which makes his letters models of stragetic suggestion.

“In the outset Mr. Lincoln encountered the difficulties that fall to the lot of any responsible head of a Government; difficulties which are intensified by the greatness of the issues at hand, but which all have the same characteristics when they arise from the overzeal of moral reformers. Those who wished slavery abolished felt toward Mr. Lincoln a greater degree of hatred and contempt during the two years of his administration than even the rebels themselves. Brooking no delay, accepting every excuse

as a mere pretext, they pounced upon Mr. Lincoln with emphatic denunciation and bitter attack, but he knew better than they what was necessary before he took the step of emancipation they were suppressing.

“He knew better than they the loss of support he would suffer in the border States. He knew better than they that he must delay until the emancipation proclamation could be issued, not to break up slavery, but to effect a constitutional amendment, but only for military reasons and with military purposes and so he bared his breast to the shafts of criticism from the most important element of the Republican party and waited. No man in public life was ever so much abused as Lincoln. The contrast between his position in history today and the description of him by his friendly critics during the Civil War can hardly be credited.

“The great reason for the present memorial is the constant reminder it furnishes of the unexplained and unexplainable growth and development, from the humblest and homeliest soil, of Lincoln’s genius, intellect, heart and character that have commanded the gratitude of his countrymen for the good he worked with them and awakened the love and devoted administration of a world.”

FORMAL ACCEPTANCE PROGRAM

With Address by

Woodrow Wilson

On September 4th., 1916, The Lincoln Farm Association presented to the United States Government the farm on which Abraham Lincoln was born together with the beautiful granite structure containing the sacred cabin. The program follows:

Invocation—Dr. Ganfield of Centre College.

Address—Gen. John B. Castleman.

Address—Gov. Joseph W. Folk.

Address—Senator John Sharp Williams.

Presentation of the Lincoln Birth-place Farm—Robert J. Collier.

Acceptance on behalf of the United States of America—Newton D. Baker.

Flag Raising Ceremonies.

Address—President Woodrow Wilson.

Benediction—Rev. Shahan.

THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH.

We would like to think of men like Lincoln and Washington as typical Americans, but no man can be typical who is so unusual as these great men were. It was typical of American life that it should produce such men with supreme indifference as to the manner in which it produced them, and as readily here in this hut as amidst the little circle of cultivated gentlemen to whom Virginia owed so much in leadership and example. And Lincoln and Washington were typical Americans in the use they made of their genius. But there will be few such men at best, and we will not look into the mystery of how and why they come. We will only keep the door

open for them always, and a hearty welcome—after we have recognized them.

I have read many biographies of Lincoln; I have sought out with the greatest interest the many intimate stories that are told of him, the narratives of nearby friends, the sketches at close quarters, in which those who had the privilege of being associated with him have tried to depict for us the very man himself “in his habits as he lived;” but I have nowhere found a real intimate of Lincoln’s. I nowhere get the impression in any narrative or reminiscence that the writer had in fact penetrated to the heart of his mystery, or that any man could penetrate to the heart of it. That brooding spirit had no real familiars. I get the impression that it never spoke out in complete self-revelation, and that it could not reveal itself completely to anyone. It was a very lonely spirit that looked from underneath those shaggy brows and comprehended men without fully communing with them, as if, in spite of all its general efforts at comradeship, it dwelt apart, saw its visions of duty where no man looked on. There is a very holy and very terrible isolation for the conscience of every man who seeks to read the destiny in affairs for others as well as for himself, for a nation as well as for individuals. That privacy no man can intrude upon. That lonely search of the spirit for the right perhaps no man can resist. This strange child of the cabin kept company with invisible things was born into no intimacy but that of its own silently assembling and deploying thoughts.

I have come here today, not to utter an eulogy on Lincoln; he stands in need of none, but to endeavor to interpret the meaning of this gift to the nation of the place of his birth and origin. Is not this an altar

upon which we may forever keep alive the vestal fire of democracy as upon a shrine at which some of the deepest and most sacred hopes of mankind may from age to age be rekindled? For these hopes must constantly be rekindled, and only those who live can rekindle them. The only stuff that can retain the life-giving heat is the stuff of living hearts. And the hopes of mankind cannot be kept alive by words merely, by constitutions and doctrines of right and codes of liberality. The object of democracy is to transmute these into the life and action of society, the self-denial and self-sacrifice of heroic men and women willing to make their lives in embodiment of right and service and enlightened purpose. The commands of democracy are as imperative as its privileges and opportunities are wide and generous. Its compulsion is upon us. It will be great and lift a great light for the guidance of the nations only if we are great and carry that light high for the guidance of our own feet. We are not worthy to stand here unless we ourselves be in deed and in truth real democrats and servants of mankind, ready to give our very lives for the freedom and justice and spiritual exaltions of the great nation which shelters and nurtures us.

No more significant memorial could have been presented to the nation than this. It expresses so much of what is singular and noteworthy in the history of the country; it suggests so many of the things that we prize most highly in our life and in our system of government. How eloquent this little house within this shrine is of the vigor of democracy! There is nowhere in the land any home so remote, so humble, that it may not contain the power of mind and heart and conscience to which nations

yield and history submits its processes. Nature pays no tribute to aristocracy, subscribes to no creed or caste, renders fealty to no monarch or master of any name or kind. Genius is no snob. It does not run after titles or seek by preference the high circle of society. It affects humble company as well as great. It pays no special tribute to universities or learned societies or conventional standards of greatness, but serenely chooses its own comrades, its own hunts, its own cradle even, and its own life of adventure and of training. Here is proof of it. This little hut was the cradle of one of the great sons of men, a man of singular, delightful, vital genius who recently emerged upon the great stage of the nation's history, gaunt, shy, ungainly, but dominant and majestic, a natural ruler of men, himself inevitably the central picture of the great plot. No man can explain this, but every man can see how it demonstrates the vigor of democracy, here every door is open, in every hamlet and countryside, in city and wilderness alike, for the ruler to emerge when he will and claim his leadership in the free life. Such are the authentic proofs of the validity and vitality of democracy.

Here, no less, hides the mystery of democracy. Who shall guess this secret of nature and providence and a free policy? Whatever the vigor and vitality of the stock from which he sprang, its mere vigor and soundness do not explain where the man got his great heart that seemed to comprehend all mankind in its catholic and benignant sympathy, the mind that sat enthroned behind those brooding, melancholy eyes, whose vision swept many a horizon which those about him dreamed not of—that mind that comprehended what it had never seen and understood the language of affairs with the ready ease of

one to the manner born—of that nature which seemed in its varied richness to be the familiar of men of every way of life. This is the sacred mystery of democracy, that its richest fruits spring up out of soils which no man has prepared and in circumstances amidst which they are the least expected. This is a place of mystery and of reassurance.

It is likely that in a society ordered otherwise than our own Lincoln could not have found himself or the path of fame and power upon which he walked serenely to his death. In this place it is right that we should remind ourselves of the solid and striking facts upon which our faith in democracy is founded. Many another man besides Lincoln has served the nation in its highest places of counsel and of action whose origins were as humble as his. Though the greatest example of the universal energy, richness, stimulation and force of democracy, he is only one example among man. The permeating and all-pervasive virtue of the freedom which challenges us in America to make the most of every gift and power we possess every page of our history serves to emphasize and illustrate. Standing here in this place, it seems almost the whole of the stirring story.

Here Lincoln had his beginnings. Here the end and consummation of that great life seem remote and a bit incredible. And yet there was no break anywhere between beginning and end, no lack of natural sequence anywhere. Nothing really incredible happened. Lincoln was unaffectedly as much at home in the White House as he was here. Do you share with me the feeling, I wonder, that he was permanently at home nowhere? It seems to me that in the case of a man—I would rather say of a spirit—like Lincoln the question where he was is of little significance,

that it is always what he was that really arrests our thought and takes hold of our imagination. It is the spirit always that is sovereign. Lincoln, like the rest of us, was put through the discipline of the world —a very rough and exacting discipline for him, an indispensable discipline for every man who would know what he is about in the midst of the world's affairs; but his spirit got only its schooling there. It did not derive its character or its vision from the experiences which brought it to its full revelation. The test of every American must always be, not where he is, but what he is. That also is of the essence of democracy, and is the moral of which this place is most gravely expressive.

W 60





